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You Have a Gun, She Has the Key

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You Have a Gun, She Has the Key

— Kent Linthicum

“IF YOU GAVE ME THE CHANCE I would stab him again. That sounds cold, but it had to be done. I know I’m off topic, but I just want everyone to understand that. So, yeah, I was sitting in class, Geology 110, on Wednesday, same seat and everything. Our professor is gone for a few days on fieldwork. That means that we get to watch a documentary of some kind. One of the other professors in the department comes in and gets out the DVD and pops it into the computer. Some old DVD boots and the title is revealed: *An Inconvenient Truth*. I had seen it before, but was excited to have the opportunity to look at it again. The guy behind me though wasn’t so happy. He made a big show of sighing. That was when my blood started to boil.

The film started up, Mr. Gore’s opening monologue and everything. And the guy behind me started up again. He said:

‘This is offensive. I shouldn’t have to sit here and watch this. Global warming is a myth, there’s no consensus in the scientific community. This is just propaganda that’s going to turn us into some tree-hugging country that hates God. I don’t have to sit here and—’

At that moment I started to turn around. I was going to respond with fact and logic. By this point the entire class was staring at him. Soon they would be staring at me too. Didn’t matter though, I had the

perfect words and I was going to use them. Then, still turning, I saw his face. He might have been attractive on any other day, probably to another girl, but not today. His face was scrunched up in a sneer and spittle flew from his mouth along with his indignant words. There would be no words that would persuade him, his very mental existence was predicated on resisting change. That’s when I realized that my words would be futile.

So, I snatch my pencil with my hand; remember, I’m still turning around. My pencil is a little black mechanical Bic with a broken clip. Nothing special, but I knew it would do. My fist squeezes the pencil forward in my hand, so as much of the point and barrel are exposed. He, knowing the class is paying attention to him, is still flapping his jaw, although his sneer has become smug.

I don’t think he even really realized what was happening as my hand flew through the air. Didn’t matter; I put all of my energy into the point of that pencil. With all of my effort I drove it as deeply as I could into his neck. I expected more resistance, but the skin was as soft as warm butter before the tip of the black Bic.

At the time I didn’t think about it, but now I am glad that I penetrated all the way to his esophagus. He died quickly, drowning in his own blood, instead of having to bleed out. I had blood on my hand, but it

did not seem so thick to me. I suppose that I wouldn't make a good Lady Macbeth. There was nothing but chaos in the classroom as Al Gore's voice calmly told about the challenges facing humanity if we are to survive the next hundred years. I left the classroom. No one stopped me.

Now, here's the part that I would like to emphasize: I did not walk outside and hug a tree or throw my clothes off and run into the forest. That's not what this is about. This is about the survival of humanity. I made a utilitarian choice: that numb-fuck was one of many who are dragging us down. It was either they change or we die; we all die. I want my children to have the chance at life and he was standing in the way of that chance."

There was stunned silence in the courtroom. Joan watched the court from the witness stand. She guessed that there would be good odds that the next twenty to thirty years of her life would be spent in a jail. That wasn't so bad though because at least she would be able to read and at the same time contribute less carbon to the atmosphere.

"So, Miss Tellus," the judge looked past his glasses at her, "is this why you are claiming this action was self-defense?"

"Yes."

"Don't you think that maybe you could have persuaded him to change his mind?" As the judge asked his voice inflected with a pleading note, a hope that she would give him something to lessen her sentence. Nobody wanted to try a student from the

Dean's List and a volunteer for the local homeless shelter for first-degree murder.

"You are assuming that he could change his mind, your Honor, and I say that he was not able. In other words he was not fit to make decisions regarding the future of humanity—"

"How can you decide that?" The judge interrupted, leaning over the stand from the bench.

"The evidence is overwhelming," Joan said. The judge cocked an eyebrow. Joan continued: "Look, I am not saying that I should not face the consequences, only that they be lessened because this was a case of self-defense. I killed a young man. That is wrong. But let us pretend the situation was different, just for a moment. Let's say you were standing outside of a fallout shelter. In the air above you can hear the wail of a nuclear bomb as it drops. Unfortunately, outside the shelter there is a young woman, saying she does not hear a bomb and will not let you in because there is no reason for you to enter the shelter. You have a gun, she has the key. Would you kill her? I know I would. The only difference between this situation and that one is time. The sirens have been sounded, I can hear the wail of the bomb, so can you, and the evidence is concrete and visible all over the world. I want to get into the shelter and he was holding the key. He was going to kill me and my children and everyone else in this room and their children and their children's children just because he refused to hear the wail of the bomb as it fell. I don't want to die. So I acted."



There was an even longer silence in the courtroom.

“Well, not an easy decision you have given me, Miss Tellus. Your lawyer has presented ample evidence in favor of radical changes in the climate. And your statement is quite persuasive. I agree we must act, but not in the manner that you did . . . You will be sentenced to the maximum penalty for first-degree murder.” The gavel fell and the judge rose to leave.

Outside the chamber the judge paused. There was a window in the corridor that had a particularly spectacular view of the city. But as he approached the window, he noticed something was wrong: the window was vibrating. He touched it and his teeth buzzed. Still curious, the judge placed his ear to the window. As soon as he had made contact with the glass he pulled away. It did not matter though, because he heard it in the glass and all around: the wailing and falling.

